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Subject: [External] The Week's Top Five on NC Policy Watch

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NC POLICY WATCH

Stories & voices
that **matter.**

Week's Top Five on NC Policy Watch:

1. [Mark Johnson accused of misleading the public regarding literacy program spending](#)

Atkinson criticized Superintendent Mark Johnson in recent interviews with Policy Watch, nearly a month after Johnson slammed the K-12 bureaucracy for “disturbing” spending practices, including its alleged failure to dole out state capital funds in 2015 and 2016 intended to boost elementary reading proficiency.

“Are there any North Carolina lawyers who aren’t here?” asked Ed Finley, chairman of the NC Utilities Commission, as he prepared to preside over what is predicted to be a two-week slog: the Duke Energy Progress rate case.

“Mark does not understand or has not in all candor or transparency pointed out that a substantial amount of that money would be a direct result of (local) school districts not using the dollars,” says Atkinson. [[Read more...](#)]

Lead: [Tensions brewing as State Board of Education, Superintendent Mark Johnson clash again over DPI budget cuts](#)

[Atlantic Coast Pipeline sues NC landowners, asks federal court to allow “quick take” of properties](#)

The Gardner farm in Wade, population 567, in Cumberland County has been in the family for more than 70 years. On these 960 acres, two generations of Gardners have raised grains, oats, barley, soybeans, and more recently, beef cattle.



But the Gardner family is now among several defendants in a federal case involving the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. ACP, LLC, which includes majority owners Duke Energy and Dominion Energy, filed several motions over the past week asking US District Court Judge Terence Boyle to allow them to use eminent domain to seize portions of the defendants' property. However, what distinguishes this case is that ACP, LLC wants to take the property without paying the landowners first. This is known as a “quick take.”

Similar documents have been filed against five defendants, including owners of a strawberry farm, in Nash



[Read more...](#)

Lead: [Property rights crusaders nowhere to be found in Atlantic Coast Pipeline controversy](#)



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3. [Five questions with Professor Valerie Johnson](#)

Historical commission member weighs in on monuments, free speech

Valerie Johnson is the Mott Distinguished Professor of Women's Studies and Director of Africana Women's Studies at Greensboro's Bennett College and chair of the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission. She is also one of only two Black members of the 17-member North Carolina Historical Commission, which must approve any proposal for removal, relocation, or alteration of historical monuments on state property.

PW: Some were disappointed when the North Carolina Historical Commission delayed its decision on the Confederate statues in Raleigh until April. What can you tell us about what's happened since then? I'm sure you've heard plenty of people on both sides since the delay.

Johnson: The committee still has to be convened, the subcommittee that was proposed. But [Gov. Roy Cooper] has appointed a new chair, Dr. David Ruffin. We'll wait and see what happens under this new leadership. [Read more...](#)



4. [Greed, conflicts of interest and using public services to get rich](#)

Why North Carolina's coal ash and mental health crises have a lot in common

Two of the biggest stories in the North Carolina policy world right now involve large, powerful institutions. Interestingly, though the two matters are seemingly unrelated, a closer look reveals important commonalities in the controversies surrounding the state's largest electric utility and its largest regional mental health provider, Cardinal Innovation Services. Topping the list: greed and its tendency to undermine and provide major conflicts of interest in essential public services. [Read more...](#)

5. [Pressure mounts on NC's largest pork producer to clean up its act](#)

Frenches Creek Finishing lies in the watery lowlands of Bladen County, near Lion Swamp, Conkell and Briary bays, and a chain of canals that drain toward the Cape Fear River and the sea.

Owned by Murphy-Brown, the farm, which includes a nursery, can house more than 17,000 hogs, including the newborn and those ready for slaughter. It is also one of 11 industrialized swine farms named in a 2006 federal consent decree because their operations threaten the quality of the groundwater.

However, for nearly four years, Murphy-Brown has allegedly stonewalled an independent consultant's court-ordered visits to the farms. As established by the consent decree, the visits were intended to further assess each site's conditions and waste lagoons to determine if an environmental clean up was necessary. Murphy-Brown argues that it "encouraged" the consultant to visit the site. However, the consultant could enter the property only with Murphy-Brown's written permission. [Read more...](#)

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